

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: SHUM, RP
SUBJECT: CHURCHMEN AND SUGAR WORKERS ARRESTED IN
- NEGROS OCCIDENTAL

1. SUMMARY: ABOUT 120 SUGAR WORKERS AND SUPPORTERS, INCLUDING AT LEAST ONE PRIEST, WERE ARRESTED JULY 30 IN NEGROS OCCIDENTAL DURING A MEETING WITH A PLANTATION OWNER OVER THEIR PLANTING VEGETABLES IN AN UNUSED SUGAR FIELD. HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVISTS, INCLUDING EX-SENATORS DIOKNO AND TANADA, HAVE TAKEN UP THEIR DEFENSE, ALTHOUGH CHURCH SOURCES PRIVATELY CONCEDE THE ACT WAS INDEED ILLEGAL. A MILITARY PRESS RELEASE STATES THEY HAVE ALL BEEN TEMPORARILY RELEASED AND THAT SEDITION CHARGES ARE BEING PREPARED. THE MILITARY ALLEGES THEY BELONG TO FOUR "RADICAL GROUPS" LINKED TO AN UNNAMED "ILLEGAL ORGANIZATION." END SUMMARY.

2. "BULLETIN TODAY" AUGUST 12 RAN A STORY CITING AN AUGUST 8 LETTER FROM FREE LEGAL AID GROUP (FLAG) TO DEFENSE MINISTER ENRILE ASKING THE RELEASE OF 88 PERSONS RECENTLY ARRESTED IN BAGO CITY, NEGROS OCCIDENTAL. THE LETTER WAS SIGNED BY FORMER SENATORS JOSE DIOKNO AND LORENZO TANADA AND BY ATTORNEY JOKER ARROYO. IT SAID THE 88 HAD

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BEEN HELD FOR MORE THAN A WEEK "IN VIOLATION OF THEIR RIGHTS," CHARGED WITH SEDITION AND ILLEGAL SQUATTING. THE LETTER SAID THEY WERE ARRESTED DURING A "DIALOGUE" BETWEEN A SUGAR PLANTATION OWNER AND SUGAR WORKERS OF THE PLANTATION. OBSERVERS OF THE DIALOGUE INCLUDED THREE PRIESTS, SEVERAL OFFICERS OF THE NATIONAL FEDERATION OF SUGAR WORKERS, LOCAL CATHOLIC BISHOP ANTONIO FORTICH, THE

BAGO CITY MAYOR AND TWO SENIOR POLICE OFFICERS.

3. "BULLETIN TODAY" AND "TIMES JOURNAL" OF AUGUST 13 GAVE THE MILITARY RESPONSE. IT SAID 128 PERSONS HAD BEEN ARRESTED IN THE INCIDENT. THEY HAVE BEEN TEMPORARILY RELEASED, BUT CRIMINAL CHARGES OF SEDITION AND INCITING TO SEDITION ARE BEING PREPARED. MOST OF THE GROUP WERE RELEASED BEFORE AUGUST 8, ONE WAS RELEASED ON AUGUST 8, AND FIVE LEADERS WERE RELEASED AUGUST 12. ACCORDING TO THE ARTICLE, THE PROVINCIAL CONSTABULARY COMMANDER REPORTED THAT THEY BELONG TO FOUR "RADICAL" GROUPS WHICH, "BASED ON OTHER SEIZED DOCUMENTS, ... HAVE A TIE-UP WITH AN ILLEGAL ORGANIZATION IN THE COUNTRY." THE FOUR GROUPS WERE LISTED AS: PANIMBAHON, TINDOG SA KATARUNGAN MOVEMENT, ALAY KAPWA, AND ALYANSA DAMPIG SA KATARUNGAN. ACCORDING TO THE REPORT, ABOUT 200 "INTRUDERS" CLEARED 12 HECTARES OF THE SUGAR PLANTATION ON JULY 19 AND PLANTED BANANAS AND RICE. THEY REFUSED TO VACATE THE PROPERTY AND REPORTEDLY THREATENED AN OVERSEER WITH BODILY HARM. THEY ALSO IGNORED AN ORDER TO VACATE BY THE BAGO CITY POLICE COMMANDER.

4. CHURCH SOURCES IN MANILA TOLD EMBOFF LAST WEEK THAT A GROUP OF TEMPORARILY UNEMPLOYED SUGAR WORKERS HAD PLANTED VEGETABLES IN AN UNUSED CORNER OF THE LARGE PLANTATION. THEY SAID THERE IS NO QUESTION THAT THE ACT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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WAS ILLEGAL, BUT THEY FELT IT WAS MORALLY JUSTIFIED IN VIEW OF THE ECONOMIC CONDITION OF SUGAR WORKERS. A DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE WORKERS AND THE OWNER WAS SET UP JULY 30 AT THE BAGO CITY SOCIAL HALL. IT SEEMED TO BE GOING REASONABLY WELL WHEN POLICE "RIOT SQUADS" SURROUNDED THE BUILDING AND THEN ENTERED IT. ONE WORKER BROUGHT OUT A CAMERA, IT WAS CONFISCATED, AND "A RUMBLE ENSUED" DURING WHICH 126 SUGAR WORKERS AND THEIR SUPPORTERS, INCLUDING ONE PRIEST, WERE ARRESTED. BISHOP FORTICH WAS PRESENT AND HAS REPORTEDLY PROTESTED THE ARRESTS. (NEW YORK TIMES CARRIED A STORY BASED ON THE CHURCH VERSION AUGUST 7.) MURPHY

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